PLAY NOT REALLY SHOCKING

PARIS A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED AT "LE FOYER."

New Work of Mirbeau and Natanson Was Once Rejected by Claretie—Racehorses Left to Archbishop—Piano Needed at the President's Palace.

PARIS, Dec. 9.—Paris is annoyed—distinctly annoyed. It feels that it has been swindled. It was prepared to be shocked, it counted on being shocked, and now—But to begin at the beginning. MM. Mirbeau and Natanson wrote a piece called "Le Foyer" which they sent to M. Jules Claretie, the director of the first theatre in France, the Comédie Française. M. Claretie, remembering how M. Mirbeau's previous piece ("Les affaires sont les affaires"—"Business is business") had filled up the holes in the treasury made by producing the classics, welcomed the new piece. When he read it he weakened and returned the manuscript. Could the manager of a theatre receiving a Government subvention of $48,000 a year produce a play in which the hero was a Senator and a member of the Academy who shut his eyes to his wife's remunerative infidelities and who embezzled and begged his wife to obtain a large sum from her lover to save the husband from prosecution?

No, reluctantly M. Jules Claretie decided, it was impossible. Possibly he remembered that the office of secretary to the academy was then vacant and he, already one of the Immortals, was eminently fitted to fill it and retire from management of a state theatre.

The Comédie Française was at the time having a streak of bad fortune and none of its new plays really caught on, so after some time M. Claretie in despair thought that the "Foyer" somewhat deodorised might be ventured. The Senatorship might be taken from the hero, and he might be degraded to a mere candidate for the academy.

On these terms (so M. Claretie understood) the play was put in rehearsal, but the authors understood quite differently; they understood that their play was accepted unconditionally After some seventeen full rehearsals M. Claretie stopped the play and announced that he could not produce it without many material alterations. The authors refused to make them and went to law to compel M. Claretie to fulfil his undertaking to produce the play. The law sided with the authors and the play has been produced.

With this prologue to arouse the public interest, the rush for seats for the dress rehearsal was overwhelming. A house full of notabilities in the literary and political worlds, of critics, of theatrical stars of every magnitude, of fashionable women, awaited the unfolding of the play that was to shock them by the plainness of its words and the boldness of its situations. But the shock never came. The language was wild in comparison with some recent plays, for instance, "Samson"; one or two situations caused some murmurs, but these were covered by applause. Either M. Claretie had been oversensitive or the authors had themselves used the blue pencil freely, as well as the scissors, for it was whispered that the play had been written in four acts, while only three were given; at any rate it was a disappointed audience that filed out of the theatre and one that felt it had a just grievance.

The story of the play, which was not revealed at the trial between the authors and M. Claretie, introduces us to the household of the *Baron Courtin*. He is the Senator (belonging to the Right!) and Academician. He is noted for his works of charity, especially among the Paris women workers. He has founded a house where poor girls are reared and may learn a trade. This charitable organization is called "Le Foyer" (the hearth). Money is needed for the work just when one of the children has been killed by the negligence of a nurse who has shut her up in a cupboard and forgotten all about her. This important occurrence is hushed up, but it is proving more difficult to hide the fact that another girl has been so severely beaten that she has had to be sent to a hospital, for the newspapers have got hold of the latter story.

Baron Courtin is much perturbed; an inquiry would show up the cruelties and vices of the woman manager and might also discover that the finances of the institution are short by $80,000, which he has taken and lost on the stock market. He is fully aware that his wife has been for some ten years the intimate friend of the financier *Biron*, who has given her large sums. She has broken off this liaison, not for any virtuous reasons, but because she has fallen in love with a young society man who is a Socialist, *Robert d'Auberval*. *Courtin* begs his wife to ask the financier to give her the $80,000. *Biron* agrees on conditions that can easily be guessed, only he does not ask her to break with *D'Auberval*. In fact he resolves to take them both for a trip in his yacht and *Baron Courtin* with them. The *Baron* accepts the invitation, explaining that it will be a splendid opportunity for him to write the speech which as member of the Academy he is soon going to deliver in connection with the distribution of the prizes for virtue.

For a few days it was among the possibilities that the sporting prophets might call attention to the chances of the Archbishop of Paris's (Mgr. Amette's Clemencetto or his Caillauxtot, for the Archbishop has become the owner of a racing stable, without his knowledge and against his will. The Archbishop was informed recently that the Countess de Rainneville had died and left him her fortune. As the Archbishop did not know the Countess he notified the lawyers that he did not believe that he ought to accept the legacy. The lawyer replied that the Countess had no near relatives and that the usual formalities had been already carried out, so that the estate was already legally in the possession of the Archbishop.

The estate was not a large one, but it included the deceased's racing stable, several thoroughbreds, with the usual staff of stable boys and two jockeys under retaining fees.

The Countess was an opponent of the party now in power and left her property to the Archbishop as a token of her sympathy with the Church and its treatment by the present Government, after whose Ministers she had named her horses.

The Archbishop's colors, however, will not be seen on the turf, as he has given orders for the sale of the stable.

The new regulations against ladies' large hats in theatres have not been allowed to become a dead letter. On November 10 a lady took her seat in an orchestra stall at the Olympia Music Hall and forthwith most of the stage was hidden from those sitting behind her by her immense hat. Cries of "Hat!" "Hat!" failed to influence the lady, so the manager asked her to remove her hat or herself. She refused each alternative, and it was necessary to call in the force of arms in the person of a Republican guard (always on duty in a Paris theatre) to remove the lady and the hat.

As she forgot herself to the extent of declaring to the soldier that it was a "dirty trick" she was haled before the law and fined $5 for insulting the uniform.

An amusing little incident in connection with the King of Sweden's recent visit to Paris is revealed by *La Vie Parisienne*. It appears that for a quiet evening party to which President Fallières had invited the King and Queen the President had engaged a well known operatic star to sing and Massenet, who was one of the guests, had promised to accompany on the piano.

Just before dinner the President remembered there was no piano in the Palace, the only one he possessed having been given to his daughter on her marriage to M. Lanes. In a great hurry an attaché went to borrow a piano from one of the President's staff officers who lives close by.

This piano was rushed into the drawing room while the guests were at dinner, but it was one of those sold on the hire purchase system for $5 a month and when Massenet tried it he got up in disgust and said it was impossible for him to touch such an instrument. Fortunately Mr. Isidore de Lara was also present and at Madame Fallières's request he accompanied the singer.

M. Alfred Picard, the new Minister of Marine, is perhaps the only member of the Academy of Sciences who has never missed a meeting of that institution. Even now he does not allow his new office to interfere with his regular attendance.

He has just handed to the academy a letter in which he as Minister of Marine agrees to a service of signals from the Eiffel Tower which will give Paris time by wireless telegraphy to all ships fitted up with wireless receivers, thus giving effect to a proposal made some months ago by the Academy of Sciences.

As no two public clocks in Paris agree it is somewhat interesting to note that the time is to be taken from the large clock in St. Lazare station, which will be observed by telescopes from the Eiffel Tower. When there is a fog the chronometer of the Eiffel Tower's engineer will be used.

ORDER FOR LINDSAY RUSSELL.

Emperor of Japan Gives Him a Decoration—Gets a Loving Cup Too.

Lindsay Russell, who did much toward organizing the Japan Society of New York two winters ago and who is its vice-president, came in for two little surprises at the dinner given in his honor at the Hotel Astor last night by several Japanese members of the society. One was a silver loving cup bearing the names of nine of the Japanese gentlemen, the other was a star of the Order of the Rising Sun bestowed upon him by the Emperor of Japan through Ambassador Kogoro Takahira.

There were eighteen covers laid in the Art Room of the hotel and those who sat down to the dinner besides the guest of honor were Baron Takahira, E. S. A. De Lima, Prof. Dutton, Hamilton Holt, E. H. Olcott, honorary Japanese Consul at Boston; Consul-General Yada of Vancouver, Consul-General Midzuno of this port, R. Arai, K. Fukui, I. K. Imanshi, Y. Murai, M. Nagai, Y. Ono, J. Takamine and D. Ushikobo.

Baron Takahira played the part of toastmaster. After the coffee he introduced Consul-General Midzuno, who made a little speech commending Mr. Russell for the part he had played in the affairs of the Japan Society and dwelling upon the influence the society had brought to bear upon the relations of Japan and America. After his felicitations the Consul-General brought out the silver loving cup. The cup bore an inscription testifying to Mr. Russell's services in organizing the society and bearing the names of all the Japanese present except the Ambassador and the Consul-General from Vancouver.

Then it was the turn of the Ambassador to make the second gift to the guest of the evening. His Excellency enjoyed this second surprise hugely, for not even the guests at the dinner had known that the Emperor had seen fit to confer the decoration.

A TOWN'S TWO CENTENARIANS.

Mrs. Van Riper, 108, Was Born in Midland Park Where Mrs. Farrell, 105, Lives.

A mere matter of 105 years appears insignificant to Mrs. Ann Van Riper, who lives on a farm between Upper Saddle River and Ramsey, N. J. She herself has turned 108 and when she was shown the story in the newspapers of the celebration at Midland Park of Mrs. Mary Farrell's 105th birthday, she said she was born in Midland Park herself and that in point of age she had Mrs. Farrell beaten by three years and a half. That puts Mrs. Van Riper back to the year when Thomas Jefferson was first elected President of the United States.

Mrs. Van Riper lived for thirty-five years on a farm of thirty-five acres situated between Allendale and Ramsey on the old Franklin turnpike. Her husband was Ryneer Van Riper and he died about thirty-five years ago. At the time of his death her daughter, Maria, whom Mrs. Van Riper calls her baby, but who is a widow four times over, was 35 years old, and is therefore nearing 70 herself.

About four months ago the mother and daughter moved into a house on the farm of Martin Litchult near Ramsey and since that time have lived there virtually as his guests. Mrs. Van Riper is blind and besides that is helpless in consequence of injuries which she sustained falling down stairs. Since she moved to the Litchult farm she has been outdoors only once, but the society of her relatively youthful daughter keeps her cheerful.

CHURCH CENTENNIAL BEGUN.

Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Celebrates an Anniversary.

Contennial services began yesterday morning at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Yesterday morning the pastor, the Rev. J. Ross Stevenson, D. D., preached the anniversary sermon. He recalled the circumstances which led in 1809 to the formation of the Cedar street church and told of the general condition of Presbyterianism at that time. In the city of New York, he said, there were only four Presbyterian churches, and the contributions from these and the few societies located on Long Island, which went to make up the New York Presbytery, amounted to only a trifle more than $1,000 annually. The congregation sang an anniversary hymn written especially for the occasion by Henry W. Jessup, with music by Frank L. Sealy.

In the afternoon there was a special communion service for the old and new members of the church Last night Dr. Stevenson preached on the theme, "Our Indebtedness to Great Religious Movements."

To-night the missionary work of the church will be reviewed at a service at which the Rev. A. F. Schauffler, the Rev. Charles L. Thompson and Robert E. Speer will speak on city missions, home missions and foreign missions.

HEAP PRAISE ON GUS THOMAS

AMERICAN DRAMATISTS TELL HIM HOW GREAT HE IS.

Guest Isn't So Sure and Ascribes What Little Greatness He Has to Long Service—Kidder Reads Poem—J. I. C. Clark and Sydney Rosenfeld Speak.

The American Dramatists Club gave a dinner at Delmonico's last night in honor of Augustus Thomas, president of the club since the death of Bronson Howard. Several dozen of our best known dramatists surrounded Mr. Thomas and told him firmly that he was an ornament to the playwrights' union. Mr. Thomas did not seem to be surprised and he entered no denial. He offered to share the premiership with Charles Klein, who was low comedian of the same show in which Gus Thomas performed as leading man twenty-five years ago.

One or two producing managers who had been dining in the restaurant below innocently ventured upstairs and glanced through the door of the banquet room. They left almost instantly. Some slight confusion was created at times by cries of "Author!" "Author!" "Author!" which appeared to rise from a small party in one corner of the room consisting of Rennold Wolf and a broiled reed bird. At such times as many as fifty members of this club leaped to their feet only to be assured that the speechmaking would necessarily have to be confined to Mr. Thomas and a very few others. Bill Brady and several persons who were referred to as guests of Mr. Brady applauded heartily.

Joseph I. C. Clarke presided. With Mr. Clarke on the dais were Mr. Thomas, William Gillette, E. E. Kidder, Sydney Rosenfeld, Victor Herbert, William C. De Mille and Eugene Presbrey. Scattered around the room were Channing Pollock, Rennold Wolf, Rupert Hughes, Bruce McRae, John Philip Sousa, who is a playwright as well as a bandmaster; Hollis E. Cooley, Frederic Thompson, Gleamore Davis, Judge Dittenhoefer, William A. Brady, R. H. Burnside, De Wolf Hopper, Winchell Smith, John Corbin of the New Theatre, Charles Klein and his brother Mannie of the Hippodrome, Theodore Burt Sayre and a number of active members of the Lambs, Friars and the Forty-second Street Country Club.

J. I. C. Clarke said that the principal requisite for membership in the club was to have one play produced before a paying audience. [Laughter.] He thought nobody would question Mr. Thomas's right to membership. For the next fifteen mintes Mr. Clarke was heard to say that Gus Thomas was some playwright when you came to size him up and down and crossways, and that he (Mr. Clarke) believed that the name of Augustus Thomas [cheers] would go ringing [loud cheers] down the reverberating [applause and cheers] halls of time [crashing applause], or words to that effect.

Sydney Rosenfeld lamented that so many aspiring playmakers had fallen by the wayside. He thought Thomas had won out because he had risen above the friction of illiterate minds. [Great applause.] He quoted Milton, Lee Shubert and Byron in rounding off his eulogy of Mr. Thomas and suggested that Mr. Thomas was the dramatic Julius Cæsar of the age.

E. E. Kidder read an original poem into which he had inserted deftly a number of puns which excited the dramatists to a high degree. When he sprang one about Thomas on the Bryany deep there were loud cries for help.

Mr. Thomas, who is crowding Sim Ford and Pat Murphy as an after dinner speaker, expressed a sceptical opinion of the brand of compliments one is handed at banquets when everybody is in capital humor. One time, twenty years ago, he produced a play, a very bad play, he admitted, over in Newark. Digby Bell's acting scored with the audience, who called Digby before the curtain. Then Thomas himself was called and lauded Digby highly. Digby wept over so many compliments from Thomas.

"Cheer up, Digby, I didn't mean 'em," said the playwright.

He talked about the length of his own service as a dramatic author and thought that the presidency of the club had come to him largely because he had been working around here longer than anybody else. His first play in New York was brought out in 1886, his first big production in 1889. Most of the American dramatists who were at the dinner last night were in the nursery or at school when Mr. Thomas started to write.

William Gillette had written a play or two, but Mr. Gillette's acting overshadowed his writing. Clyde Fitch hadn't been heard of and neither had Charles Klein. Then Mr. Thomas discussed the general foolishness of trying to make rules for the writing of plays. It couldn't be done, he was sure. [Applause.]

"No old playwright can tell a young one how to build a play," said he. "There are no rules to the game and there isn't a single accepted maxim that you can't break and make money. The greatest of them all misled more people than anybody ever did when he said that playwrighting was holding the mirror up to nature. Shakespeare never did that in his life." [Laughter].

Mr. Thomas said that no playwright could write above his audience, at least he had never seen it done. He thought that the greatest obligation that lay upon dramatic authors was to live clean, honorable, high minded lives. Otherwise they simply couldn't write the best that was in them.

"Now I don't say you shouldn't take a drink of whiskey," said he, "because I believe a man should if he wants it. [Applause.] I don't say you mustn't support Bryan. I don't say you musn't go to prizefights, because a little of that is all right. I belong to three or four clubs [laughter and applause] and I like to see a good fight now and then, but we should all try to advance the standard of our manhood if we want to do our best work." [Applause.]

Replying to a suggestion by Sydney Rosenfeld that he, with Charles Klein and other dramatic authors who had made much money out of their writings, should start an ideal theatre where ideal plays might be produced, Mr. Thomas said he didn't believe we needed another theatre of that kind if the New Theatre made good on its promises.

"Twelve years ago," said Mr. Thomas, "William Gillette, Bronson Howard, Clyde Fitch, Sydney Rosenfeld and myself met at the Lotos Club and sat around a table to plan just the sort of theatre that has been suggested. We each agreed to put a play in a pool so that a manager who should try the experiment we wanted would have something to fall back upon. The plan fell through, partly because we couldn't find a manager with sufficient optimism. I remember that the play I offered was "Arizona," which was rejected. [Laughter.] It has been playing steadily ever since. [Laughter and applause.]

Mr. Thomas, discussing the complaint of young dramatists that they couldn't get a hearing for their wares, couldn't quite see it that way. He didn't think that enough American playwrights of ability were offering the goods. The Empire Theatre needs three plays a year and can't get them on this side, he said. The same was true of fifteen other theatres in New York.

"The trouble is the American young men don't produce enough good plays," he said.

The way to win fame and money in playwrighting, Mr. Thomas confided, was to figure out what the public would be thinking about a year ahead and then build a play around that subject. Klein did it with "The Lion and the Mouse," he said. Broadhurst with "The Man of the Hour" and he had attempted the same thing with "The Witching Hour."

Mr. Thomas finished by handing out a free tip to aspiring young dramatists.

"Great plays remain to be written about the American Jew and about socialism," said he. "I mean the American Jew with his fine qualities as we know them. I don't mean the dull kind of socialism that we hear from platforms and in speeches, but a sort of celestial socialism that we sometimes read about."

Others that talked were Eugene Presbrey, William Gillette and Victor Herbert.

ANTI-MASH NOTE BILL

Proposed by a Press Agent Who Has an Assemblyman's Name in His Story.

The press agent of "The Man from Home" company declared last night that at the next session of the Legislature a bill would be introduced through the efforts of Abraham Greenburg, representing the Thirty-first Assembly district, making it a misdemeanor for men to send notes back stage to actresses appearing in a play Joe Plunkett, who looks after publicity for "The Man from Home," gave out the details of the bill last night. He said:

The bill among other things will provide for the registration of all male patrons desiring to send notes to any actress appearing in the play, which registration book will be supplied by the manager of the theatre, and the person sending said note must sign his name and answer the following questions, to wit:

Are you married or single?
Where do you reside?

The object of these interrogations are twofold:

First, to ascertain whether the sender of the mash epistle is married, and if so to cause the note to be preserved and exhibited to his wife; and

Second, to be used against him as evidence upon which he may be held to answer in accordance with the provisions of this act, which violation, if this bill becomes a law, will be punishable by the imprisonment of one year or a fine of $1,000 or both to the sender of the note.

NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR IT.

Advertisements for THE SUN and THE EVENING SUN may be left at any American District Messenger office in the city.

MORE WOMEN FOR A NEW TOWN.

Roebling, N. J., Was Handicapped Without Them, So a Factory Will Be Moved.

TRENTON, N. J., Dec. 20.—The John A. Roebling's Sons Company has completed arrangements for removing from this city to the new town of Roebling that part of its business connected with the manufacture of wire cloth.

The principal reason assigned for this action is that the wire cloth department gives employment to a large number of women. The lack of work for women at Roebling has proved a serious handicap in the operation of the new town, many of the male employees refusing to stay there because the women in their families could not get work. It is believed by the Roeblings that the adjustment of work between the sexes will be of great advantage to the small town.

Resigns a Pastorate He Served for Fifty eight Years.

LANCASTER, N. Y., Dec. 20.—Rev. William S. Waith resigned the pastorate of the Lancaster Presbyterian Church to-day after having served it continuously for fifty-eight years. He is very active and had spent his vacation this summer in England, where he and his wife celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Dr. Waith attends to pastoral duties daily, but thinks a younger man can serve the church better. He has had but one pastorate. He was until a year ago secretary of the Buffalo Presbytery.

Dinner to Chairman Parsons.

The executive committee of the Republican county committee will give a dinner in honor of Herbert Parsons at the Republican Club on December 2[illegible]. All of the Republican Representatives, Senators and Assemblymen-elect from this county have been invited to attend.

The dinner, it is understood, is to be somewhat informal and it is expected that there will be more or less talk regarding the Mayoralty campaign. Ostensibly the dinner is being given to Mr. Parsons to congratulate him on his leadership in the recent campaign.